



### **Kentucky Strengthening Families Theory of Change**

It is the premise of Kentucky's Strengthening Families (KYSF) that we develop pathways to child and family well-being by promoting Protective Factors (PF) for families. 2015 data shows that 59% of Kentucky families experienced at least one adverse childhood experience (measure of family stress), with over half of those families reporting two or more adverse experiences. By implementing two-generation and strength-based strategies, organizations support and nurture PF for families. This practice results in resilient and responsive parents/caregivers who are able to lessen the negative impact of childhood stress and support the development and early learning of their young children. KYSF recognizes Nurturing and Attachment as a sixth PF. In response to the five core beliefs below, KYSF believes that families' ensuring their children feel loved and safe is critical. KYSF focuses on buffering toxic stress and Adverse Childhood Experiences, which requires that families and providers understand the importance of a loving, nurturing bond between child and caregiver.

#### **KYSF Core Beliefs**

Promote strong families and healthy development for families prenatally through age five.

Partner with all families and celebrate differences.

Use protective factors as a strengths-based philosophy to buffer for toxic stress.

Build knowledge and skills for individual and system change.

Create safe, stable, and nurturing environments for people to have responsive and caring relationships.

# Two-Generation and Strength-Based Strategies

Promote protective factors into partnerships with families and integrate factors into supports.

Develop relationships of mutual respect with and between parents/caregivers. Recognize the values, expertise and role of parents as their children's primary caregiver.

Assess and respond to family stress related to adversity. Recognize impact of adversity and promote resiliency of parents and children.

Create "pathways" for linking families to resources. Develop partnerships and process for referrals.

Assess and nurture social and emotional wellness of families. Provide skill building or link children to services.

## Short-Term Outcomes

Families have reliable networks of support.

Families know how to access resources.

Families are knowledgeable and confident about child development and parenting.

Families nurture children's social and emotional development.

### Long-Term Outcomes

Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences lessened, as evidenced by healthy children engaged and prepared for school success.

Kentucky's children better prepared for success in school. Number of children ready for Kindergarten increases by 5% by fall of 2020.

#### **Key Drivers**

Increased access to quality child care: Increased capacity in star-rated child care programs.

Fewer families living in poverty: Decreased number of families living at or below 200% of poverty.

Less children experience child abuse or neglect:
Decreased number of abuse

substantiations.

More children born healthy: Decreased number of children born prematurely or with lowbirth weight.

More children proficient in math and reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: Increased number of children proficient math and science.

More parents access child development resources and support: Increased number of parents access a parenting resource or service.





#### **Evaluation Plan:**

**Short-Term Outcomes:** are measured through the Protective Factors Survey. Each of the four outcomes aligns with a functioning area captured on the survey. Data will be collected annually from pilot groups representing various systems across Kentucky. Results will help determine:

- The percentage of Kentucky families that report improved access to resources and use of practices that support their protective factors;
- The impact KYSF supports and resources has had on organizations' success in improving results for families.

**Long-Term Outcomes:** are measured by the percent of children considered "ready" based upon meeting benchmarks in the five areas screened on the Brigance Kindergarten Screen. This tool considers children's development in five areas: physical, academic, language, self-help, and social emotional. Baseline data in 2015 indicated readiness for 50% of children in physical, 36% in academic and cognitive; 72% in language, 54% in self-help, and 78% in social emotional development areas.

**Drivers:** Kindergarten readiness – per KYSF – is inclusive of the health and wellness of young children and their families. To measure the impact of the protective factors on the long-term goal of children being ready for school, additional drivers pertaining to family wellness are monitored. These drivers align with wellness indicators currently collected in Kentucky through various systems. This change model theorizes with the intentional promotion of protective factors that family stress decreases and the following wellness indicators improve:

Driver	Wellness Indicator	2015 Data	2016 Data	2017 Data	2018 Data	2019 Data	2020 Data
More children have access to	Increased capacity in more star-rated child	87,372	131,327	166,254	160,000	164,879	160,896
quality child care.	care programs.						
Fewer children are living in	Decreased number of families living at	174,490	174,762	53%	52.5%	50.8%	50%
poverty.	200% of poverty.	53.1%	53.3%				
Less children experience child	Decreased number of child abuse	17,917	19,132	16,548	17,457	No data	No data
abuse or neglect.	substantiations for children 0-17.	1.8%	1.9%	1.5%	1.3%		
More children are born healthy.	Decreased number of children born with a	4,818	4,666	8.8%	No data	No data	No data
	low birth weight.	8.9%	8.7%				
	Decreased number of preterm babies.	5,981	6,089	10.9%	10.5%	3.7%	11.3%
		11.1%	11.1%				
More children are proficient in	Increased numbers of children proficient	45.8% math	47.6% math	50.4% math	47.7% math	47.8% math	No data
math and reading by 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade.	in math and science.	54.1% reading	54.3% reading	55.2% reading	52.7% reading	53.1% reading	
More parents access child	Increased number of parents access a	Data determined locally could include participation in a home visitation program (i.e.					
development resources and	parenting resource or service.	HANDS) or number of parents attending/completing a parenting series (i.e. Born Learning					
support.		Academies, Parent Cafés, etc.).					

Note: 2015-2020 data taken from statewide early childhood profile produced by the Governor's Office of Early Childhood using data from KLDS. Wellness indicators and data can be updated to reflect your own region or community-based data.